

~~PLUMBETH~~ AMENDMENT

Delivered at the 6th Annual Lincoln Banquet,
Columbus, Ohio, February 14, 1893

Three great sea voyages have had greater influence upon the history and progress of the human race than any event which has happened since the birth of Christ. The history of these voyages and their consequences is the history of our country. Columbus, the inspired mariner of Genoa, with a sublime courage almost without a parallel in history, set sail; himself sailing into immortality, his caravels opening a pathway through the unknown seas, until guided by propitious stars and favoring winds they anchored at the gateway of the greatest continent of the earth. A country compared to which, "the promised land flowing with milk and honey," is but a beggar's pittance. A country upon whose shores the tides of two great oceans ebb and flow; a country whose mountains are filled with silver and gold, with coal and with iron, and whose fertile valleys are threaded by the grandest net work of navigable rivers on the globe; a country with almost every variety of climate, of fruit and of flower; this is the gem which Columbus snatched from the sea.

NOT A WHITE MAN'S COUNTRY,

but a country reserved for the representatives of every variety of the human race. Old superstitions, old tyrannies and old despotisms perished with the nations that they could not save. What though for a few centuries the ghosts of these departing spirits did haunt our shores, they could not stand before that advancing host of freemen,

every one of whom bore a sceptre and wore a crown.

But the best that the heart felt and the mind conceived in those civilizations which flourished on the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile, the shores of the Mediterranean at Athens and on the banks of the Tiber, was embalmed and transmitted through the centuries to find here the only soil in which it could have development and growth.

Again the horizon is whitened by a sail. Not the caravels of Columbus, but the May Flower, bearing the Pilgrim Fathers and the germs of our Republican institutions. Fleeing from oppression beyond the sea, coming to dwell in the wilderness, with old Plymouth Rock for their cathedral, their music the restless murmur of the sea, while the scene is lighted by the lamps of heaven, the Pilgrim Fathers married Civil and Religious Liberty to our country forever.

This continent is the great family mansion which God has built and furnished with unlimited supplies for the purpose of reassembling the scattered members of the human family, to enjoy together the fruits of liberty, fraternity and prosperity. The Indian was already here, but he was not permitted to level the forest, navigate the rivers, till away the fertility of the soil, or to rob the mountains of their wealth of gold, silver, iron and stone, until the other members of the family arrived. When the roll was called, the Englishman, the German, the Frenchman, the Spaniard, the Indian, each answered to his name. When the Negro's name was called there was silence, each looked at the other. The Negro was not here. He had no ship. He could not come. In which condition of affairs his white brother rigged out a vessel and

brought him over. Our third great voyage is ended, bearing momentous issues, another ship comes in from sea. It is the old Dutch man-of-war with her cargo of twenty Negroes, which landed at Jamestown, Va., in 1619. Ever since the landing of this vessel the Negro has answered "present" whenever his country called. When called upon to drain the swamps and till the fair plantations of the South, though beaten, cursed and robbed, rewarded with the severance of the tenderest ties of affection, he answered "present" every day for two hundred and fifty years. American Independence, like every good gift, has been bought with blood. And the first blood shed in its behalf was that of the Negro patriot, Crispus Attucks. When the Revolutionary heroes were being overcome by the British at the battle of Bunker's Hill, it was Peter Salem, a Negro, who shot Major Pitcarin and turned the tide of battle there.

Among all the nationalities and races of this country,

THE NEGRO IS THE ONLY INVITED GUEST

The others came of their own accord; he had a pressing invitation to be present here. But since the world began did ever guest cause so much commotion in a national household? The other members of the family have been fighting and contending about him ever since he arrived.

"Who is he?" As to his origin and identity scientist disagree and modern history is either silent or incoherent.

"What Shall we Do with The Negro?"

This question has divided churches and religious denominations; it has sundered the fraternal ties of secret societies; it has perplexed statesmen; it has divided parties; it has appealed to the highest tribunal in the land for settlement, only to be more complicated by

the learned decisions of the courts; it has marshalled armies and nearly caused "the government of the people and by the people and for the people to perish from the earth."

This question, "What shall we do with the Negro?" presented itself for solution when the foundations of our government were laid. One of our statesmen has observed that, "The compromises on the Slavery question inserted in the Constitution were among the essential conditions upon which the federal government was organized. If the African slave trade had not been permitted to continue for twenty years, if it had not been conceded that three-fifths of the slaves should be returned to their owners, the thirteen States would not have been able in 1787 to form a more perfect union."

Thus we see that the Negro has been in politics ever since the adoption of the Constitution.

But, throughout the long night of bondage, for three quarters of a century, not a single act designed for the betterment or advantage of the Negro can be found upon the statute books of any Southern State. Even as late as '62 the Democratic State convention of Pennsylvania said: "This government was established exclusively for the white race." In every State the Negro was denied those primary rights which centuries before had been wrested from King John at Runnymede and recorded in Magna Charta. The immortal principles laid down in the Declaration of Independence loosed not the fetters of a slave. The South was let alone until they caused eleven stars to fall from our glorious flag, and it took a million bayonets to pin them back to the place from which

they had wandered, there to remain as long as the Republic shall endure. When secession and rebellion threatened the overthrow of the Constitution and the peril of our national life it was

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

the party of the most illustrious names, the party of the most immortal deeds that adorn the pages of our history-this party it was that joined battle with rebellion, willing, in the language of Mr. Lincoln, if God so willed, "to continue the war until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil should be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash should be paid with another drawn by the sword."

Amid the cannon's roar the Republican party heard the voice of God and above the smoke of battle four million fetters towered like a monument to heaven. **To our country**, purged by fire and purified with blood, yea, even with the blood the slain and against the will of a united Democracy the Republican party gave not only emancipation, but also the highest dignity-a race clothed with the sacred right of elective franchise.

Failing to defeat the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment the Democratic party have endeavored to nullify it by murder, incineration, intimidation and fraud. The political power which the Democratic party lost on the battle field they have sought to regain by committing a rape on the ballot box more infamous than those widely published crimes which that proverbial "burly negro fiend" is said at times to attempt upon the purity of Southern homes. The South invests the Negro with the stripes of the flag it failed to destroy, but denies to him both the promise and protection of its stars.

The Afro-American has voted the Republican ticket because the Democratic party has wilfully, continually and maliciously opposed every law designed to secure his freedom, his franchise and his enjoyment of the blessings of liberty; while all such laws in his behalf have been passed by Republican votes and signed by Republican presidents. The Democratic party which thirty years ago sought the Nation's life through the dissolution of the Union is to-day in rebellion against the Constitution of the United States through its open and flagrant violation of the Fifteenth Amendment. There has not been a fair election in any Southern state for more than seventeen years. If slavery had not been destroyed it would have destroyed the union. Even so, if we do not put an end to

NULLIFICATION

nullification will put an end to our government as it now exists. This subversion of the Fifteenth Amendment by the Democratic party in the "New South" is undermining the very foundation of the Republic. The Negro is not the only nor perhaps the greatest sufferer by this violence. It breeds disrespect for the fundamental principles of our government on the part of those who silently permit this outrage to proceed, as well as on the part of those guilty of its commission. This violation is sowing the seed of anarchy. It substitutes for the rule of the majority the rule of an unscrupulous minority. Under the old regime, in the apportionment of representatives to Congress, three-fifths of the Negroes were counted. Now all the Negroes are counted, but in no Southern State is their vote counted for the party or the candidate of their choice. Districts overwhelmingly Republican send Democratic representatives to Congress. These men who ride into the National Capitol over the

bones of murdered men or by means of intimidation and fraud, actually have three times the political power of a man who has been honestly elected in Ohio, Pennsylvania or New York.

In States overwhelmingly Republican the electoral vote is openly given to the candidate of the opposing party. Thus a president of the United States may be made to take his seat athwart the graves of murdered citizens, and to seize the reins of government in defiance to the will of the lawfully constituted majority. The person who attacks or rebukes this high-handed treason is accused of "waving the bloody shirt" and of "seeking to stir up sectional hatred." The South comes forward with its old cry, "let us alone; we can settle all our difficulties," which they have done, the shot-gun and the Winchester rifle coming in for a large share of the glory.

The Republican press, Republican statesmen and Republican orators have been too long silent. We have too easily abandoned the Southern Republican to his fate on the grounds that the subversion of the constitution cannot be stopped. But it is my deliberate judgment and solemn belief that if Negroes were surrounding the ballot boxes with shot gun and keeping white men from the polls, we would find a way to stop it. If Negroes were fraudulently seizing the representation in scores congressional districts and the electoral vote in a dozen States, we would find a way to stop it.

WHAT DOES THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLEAD IN EXTENUATION
OF ITS CRIMES?

We are told that if the Negro were given the free exercise of his political powers he would ruin the industries of the South, that Northern capital invested there would be sunk, and finally, that the wealth

and intelligence of the South will not submit to Negro rule. Too many have been found ready to listen to this cunning apology for crime. It is true that the Negro has registered no oath of allegiance to the Democratic party, but to the best interest of his country his heart is as true as the needle to the pole. Wise men may smile at his ignorance, the rich may mock his poverty, fools may despise the color of his skin; but an ignorant man, a poor man, a black man who is thoroughly loyal, is a better and a safer voter than a rich man, and educated man, and a white man who in his heart is disloyal to the Union and who openly violates the Constitution and deries the laws. It is true that conditions have changed and new issues have arisen, but the principles of our government have not changed, nor have the rights guaranteed to citizens by the Constitution been repealed. To the exclusion of almost every other issue we have taken up

THE TARIFF.

And I rejoice in the blessings which, through the wise legislation of the Republican party, this policy has brought to the Nation. But what does a man care about the tariff whose birthright has been taken away? The question as to how the revenue for the support of the government shall be raised should be considered a secondary issue while the constitutional rights of citizens are being denied by the Democratic party in more than a dozen States. The protection of American industries, of American workmen and American homes against the competition of the cheap labor of other countries is not worthy of our undivided attention until that other American industry-the lynching of Republicans for the unconstitutional assertion of their Republicanism-is stopped; until it is as

safe for a Republican to vote in Mississippi or South Carolina as it is for a Democrat to vote in Pennsylvania or Ohio.

The Democrats claim that one of the chief causes contributing to their overwhelming victory during the late unpleasantness, was the fact that they kept prominent what they call

"THE FORCE BILL

Issue." And by this they mean that, in the South at least, the Negro shall not be allowed to vote and have it honestly returned. In other words, they appealed for votes on the ground that, if intrusted with power, the nullification of the Fifteenth Amendment should be made perpetual.

The issue should be squarely met. The Republican party stood for the enfranchisement of the Negro when his cause was unpopular, when it cost tens of thousands of votes to do it.

Perhaps it would cost tens of thousands of votes now, but it would also call to our ranks hundreds of thousands of liberty-loving patriotic men. For the American people have a conscience, and when it is properly appealed to and thoroughly aroused, though they may seem slow in the formation of their judgments, of this let all parties take note—in the end the American people will do right.

If this amendment cannot be enforced it should be repealed. But it would be still better if the law were so amended that whenever a State excludes the Negro from the right of suffrage, the Nation should have power to exclude him from the basis of apportionment. For as it, the Democrats have between forty and fifty congressmen and as many electoral votes, fraudulently obtained, with which to start, and with

such a lead as this, it is difficult as parties are now divided forus to win. But the Republican party has never taken a step backward. Her history is the history of the most glorious days of the Republic. This question may be often set aside and obscured by other issues from time to time, but it will continue to come up and plead for settlement, as throughout the Nation it breeds injustice in a thousand forms, it will plead until its pleadings are heard. The American people are slow to anger, and for this reason their indignation when aroused is all the more terrible.

The spirit which resisted George III, which put down rebellion and treason and which gave citizenship to the slave, as well as that other spirit which, with a magnanimity unparalleled, threw the protecting mantle of the flag of the Republic about those who sought its destruction; this spirit, I say, is still abroad in the land. The old cry of

"NEGRO DOMINATION"

And "Negro rule" is a false alarm. History does not record a single instance in which the Negro has attempted unlawfully or by force to dominate this country or any section thereof. He has never plotted or perpetrated a treason against the Constitution or the laws. He has never given his vote in support of any measure against the best interest of his country and his countrymen. He has a keen appreciation of his condition and his needs. The Church has more charms for him than Congress; he is more anxious to go to school than to the Senate; and now, thank God, under the changed conditions of these latter days, he is striving with more diligence to provide a home for his wife, and children than he is to obtain a mansion in the skies. But, while, this

is true, he is striving more zealously to wear a crown in the kingdom of heaven than for the uncertainty of being a ruler in the kingdoms of men. When the party of his choice has rewarded his devotion by appointing him to an humble office, with the promise of better things to come, he has been satisfied and remained as faithful as the old woman who shouted every time she went to church. One day her pastor asked her if she was happy every time she shouted. "Why, no, I'm not happy every time I shout," she said. "Then why do you shout?" he inquired, and she replied, "Why when I'm not happy I just shout off the promises." Like her, the Negro is Republican in season and out of season. Whatever others may do there are no factional quarrels among the colored citizens. They are as incorruptible as any class of citizens in the State. They do not sulk in their tents on election day; nor at the polls do they conceal a razor in the Australian blanket in order to cut any member on the ricket from the head to the foot. Despite outrage and desertion and wrong, despite passion and prejudice, as long as the banner of Republicanism bears upon it such illustrious names as Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, Garfield, Blaine, McKinley and Foraker with the principles which these names suggest, as long as gratitude is kindled by the memories of the past, and while the achievements of the present can give confidence to patriotic hearts, as long as the star of hope sheds its rays upon the pathway of the party of progress, bearing inspiring prophecies of victories to come, the colored citizens of the United States will be among the last to desert its standards or let its sacred folds trail in the dust of dishonor or defeat.

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